

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NIC-01 SAJ-01 EB-07 PM-03 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 BIB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 IGA-01 OMB-01

SR-02 ORM-01 IO-10 CIAE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 PRS-01

DODE-00 L-02 /087 W

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R 210348Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1873

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 9193

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, SREF, EMIN, UR, LA, US

SUBJECT: TALK WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR

1. I MET WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR VDOVINE ON DECEMBER 20 FOR AN HOUR. OUR CONVERSATION COVERED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS.

2. AMBASSADORS MEETING. I HAD NOT SEEN VDOVINE SINCE THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADORS MEETING IN SINGAPORE. VDOVINE'S COMMENTS ON THE MEETING WERE LIMITED BUT HE ALLUDED TO THE OPENING OF A LARGE RUSSIAN EMBASSY THERE AND OF A BRANCH OF THE RUSSIAN BANK IN PARIS. MUCH OF THE DISCUSSION, HE SAID, DEALT WITH TRADE AND ECONOMIC MATTERS. THE PROGRESS IN SINGAPORE SINCE HIS LAST VISIT WAS REMARKABLE AND LEE KUAN YEW DESERVED GREAT CREDIT FOR THE LEADERSHIP HE HAD DEMONSTRATED.

3. HONOLULU MEETING. I SAID THAT UNDER ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB'S CHAIRMANSHIP, THE U.S. MEETING HAD

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ALSO DEALT LARGELY WITH FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

THE ENERGY CRISIS AND GENERAL ECONOMIC PICTURE WERE VERY SERIOUS. VDOVINE THEN COMMENTED THAT IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD A MAJOR ECONOMIC CRISIS PLACED GREAT STRAINS ON ALL COUNTRIES. A BEGGAR THY NEIGHBOR POLICY WAS UNACCEPTABLE. ON THE SUBJECT OF LAOS, I COMMENTED THAT NOTWITHSTANDING CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AID TO LAOS ON THE ORDER OF \$70 MILLION WAS LIKELY.

4. SOVIET AID. I THEN INQUIRED REGARDING THE STATUS OF SOVIET AID TO LAOS AND WAS INFORMED BY VDOVINE THAT ALTHOUGH THE LAO WISHED THE RUSSIANS TO BUILD A NEW HOSPITAL IN LUANG PRABANG, MOSCOW WAS INSISTING THAT THIS HOSPITAL BE BUILT IN VIENTIANE AS ORIGINALLY AGREED. VDOVINE NOTED THAT A RUSSIAN HOSPITAL WAS NOT NEEDED IN VIENTIANE AND IMPLIED THAT HE WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY BRINGING MOSCOW AROUND TO HIS POINT OF VIEW.

5. SITUATION IN LAOS. VDOVINE SAID THAT THE SITUATION HERE APPEARED TO BE STABLE TO HIM ALTHOUGH RUMORS OF POSSIBLE COUPS CONTINUED TO CIRCULATE. HE SAID AS FAR AS HE COULD MAKE OUT NO RESPONSIBLE PERSON WAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING A COUP ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT BE SOME HOT-HEADS IN THAILAND WHO MIGHT UPSET THE APPLE CART. I AGREED WITH VDOVINE BUT DREW ATTENTION TO THE DEGREE TO WHICH RADIO PATHET LAO CONTINUES TO BELABOR THE THEME OF U.S. INTRIGUES WITH THE "ULTRA RIGHTISTS". VDOVINE SAID THAT LAO LEADERSHIP WAS OBSESSED WITH POLITICS. THE BASIC PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY WERE ALL ECONOMIC ONES BUT NOBODY WAS TAKING THEM SERIOUSLY OR DOING ANY SENSIBLE WORK TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC PLIGHT OF THE KINGDOM. THE LAO WOULD PROBABLY TRY AND SEND AID SEEKING MISSIONS AROUND THE WORLD AGAIN NEXT YEAR AND THE YEAR AFTER THAN BUT WOULD LEARN TO THEIR CHAGRIN THAT HANDOUTS WERE GOING TO BE EVER HARDER TO OBTAIN.

6. REFUGEES. I TOLD VDOVINE THAT THE PROBLEM WHICH CURRENTLY TROUBLED ME THE MOST WAS THE APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS OF THE PATHET LAO TO ALLOW FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO ZONES AND THAT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES

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IT WAS NIAVE TO EXPECT REFUGEES TO RETURN TO THEIR SO-CALLED LIBERATED ZONE. I DREW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT WE WERE NOT PLAYING POLITICS WITH THE REFUGEE PROBLEM AND HAD GREATLY REDUCED OUR FOOD TO REFUGEES OWING TO THE GOOD HARVEST IN THE HIGHLANDS. VDOVINE STATED THAT IN HIS VIEW THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE A SENSIBLE PLAN FOR RETURNING PEOPLE TO THEIR HOMES AND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. NO ISSUE COULD BE TREATED

INDIVIDUALLY AND THE LAO SHOULD TAKE A HARD LOOK AT THEIR PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.

7. POTASH. I TOLD VDOVINE THAT WITH OUR ASSISTANCE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SIZABLE POTASH DEPOSIT HAD BEEN FOUND BY THE LAO ON THE VIENTIANE PLAIN AND THAT IN MY VIEW PLANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SHOULD TAKE DEVELOPMENTS OF THIS KIND INTO ACCOUNT. PLANNING FOR ROADS AND RAILROADS SHOULD BE BASED ON ANTICIPATED TRAFFIC AND IT SEEMED TO ME SHORTSIGHTED TO CONSIDER A RAILROAD TO VINH UNTIL THE POSSIBILITY OF MINERAL EXTRACTION HAD BEEN STUDIED.

8. EMBASSY RELATIONS. AS I LEFT I TOLD VDOVINE THAT I SINCERELY HOPED FOR CONTINUING GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR PERSONNEL AND I BROUGHT TO HIS ATTENTION THE FACT THAT COLONEL TSARKOV HAD NOT ATTENDED ANY OF THE FAREWELL EVENTS CONNECTED WITH GENERAL TREFRY'S DEPARTURE. I SAID I HOPED THAT NONE OF OUR PEOPLE HAD DONE ANYTHING TO OFFEND THE COLONEL. VDOVINE WAS MOST APOLOGETIC AND STATED THAT THE IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN THE LINKS BETWEEN AMERICAN AND SOVIET PERSONNEL IN VIENTIANE.

9. COMMENT. I DID NOT RAISE THE CASE OF CHARLES DEAN, THE MISSING AMERICAN STUDENT, WITH VDOVINE AS THIS MATTER WAS DISCUSSED WITH HIS PERSONNEL ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO.
WHITEHOUSE

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